Solar Siting Task Force Meeting

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Issues / Solutions

Issue: The number of smaller projects 500kW or less that are being built all over the state at a rapid pace is concerning, many people have said they would rather see a few larger projects than many small ones.

Solution: Limit the number of smaller scale projects allowed to be built and identify a target number of utility scale projects and work towards that goal. This would allow for better siting choices.

Issue: Solar projects are being siting in/near environmentally sensitive areas, on prime agricultural soils, and in sensitive scenic areas…

Solution: Find that balance of preferred vs. undesirable site constraints, the mapping exercises that have been started are a step in the right direction.

Issue: A real problem with the Quechee test is that the community standard is only for the community within which the project is located, but the impact can and usually do extend to neighboring communities. The 248 process is designed to look at the wider community good, but then falls back on this parochial way of evaluating scenic impact.

Solution: A revised law should consider the clearly written community standards for any affected community.

Issue: To date there has been this idea that all solar projects need to be rendered invisible from everyone public and private. There is no other land use that is held to such a high standard. Because of this idea, developers are being forced to put a band-aid on their projects in the form of landscaping. I'm a licensed landscape architect and I love doing planting plans, but it's ridiculous to think that the solution to a poorly sited solar array is to line the entire thing with cedar trees, installed large enough to give an immediate screening affect.

Solution: There are many solutions to this issue and they should be vetted through our process, but the first solution is to lose this idea that solar projects need to be held to a higher standard than any other land use and rendered invisible.

Issue: The visual impacts of the associated project infrastructure is often overlooked and many times is not identified on the plans at all. Aside from the panels/racking systems and the inverter stations/interconnection points, there is other unsightly equipment attached/associated with these projects.

Solution: All equipment/infrastructure associated with a solar project NEEDS to be clearly identified and considered when going through the approval process. If screening were necessary these would be the areas to focus on.